

Workshop Nine

DEFINING ISSUES FOR ACTION

Objectives

- To understand the principles of the public health model and the role that policy change can play in community action.
- To understand the principles of defining issues for action.

Outcomes

- Participants will be able to understand the public health model.
- Participants will be able to understand the nature of policy.
- Participants will be able to identify some of the key criteria for choosing an issue for action.

Before You Begin: Moving from Training and Assessment to Action

Defining issues for action can make or break a community action group. Many groups falter at this most critical juncture in the program process—choosing issues that are too vague, or too broad or those that seem “safe” but relatively inconsequential—even when a more critical and broadly identified risk factor could be addressed if group members received assistance in crafting their work in a targeted and concrete manner. Often there are so many issues of concern within a community that groups falter because they do not focus their efforts on one issue at a time. In one Free to Grow community, for example, each time the community action group met, members changed their minds about which issue they wanted to work on, delaying any substantive action for months at a time. Remember that a group’s indecision may reflect ambivalence and fear regarding taking action on challenging and potentially dangerous situations. Program leadership needs to work carefully to identify member’s concerns and assist in the process of framing specific, clearly outlined issues. The case study and sample worksheets included as support for Workshops Nine and Ten are intended to assist you in this process.

I. Welcome and Agenda Review (10 Minutes)

Welcome everyone to the group meeting and review the agenda for the day’s work. Note that the process of moving a group into action requires taking the time to clearly define issues. This involves assessing the information needed to move forward and working hard to identify winnable strategies. In addition, point out that as residents seek answers to identified issues in their communities, it is critical that they understand the public health model and the role of policy in the community action process. Point out that much of the work that they have been doing to date has given them a foundation for looking at their communities environmentally. But before analyzing their assessment work and choosing issues for action, the group will take time to look at the public health model and the role of policy a little more explicitly. Note that Workshops Nine and Ten use a model scenario to introduce participants to the steps involved in moving issues to action. With this foundation, participants will be ready to begin the strategic planning process for the issues identified in their community.



POINTER – Workshop Nine has been structured to provide background information and an introductory foundation in public health policy that will familiarize participants with how public health principles can be applied to the community action process. Some participants may feel a little intimidated by this conceptual framework. It is important to point out that while the ideas contained in the workshop may be quite new to many participants, they will gain deeper understanding of them as they apply them within their work. Encourage participants to ask questions and not to be afraid to let you know if they are having difficulty understanding.

II. The Public Health Model: Moving Toward an Environmental Approach

(30 Minutes)

Use the following mini-lecture to introduce the public health model:

The public health model is based on a systems approach of looking at issues or problems in a community. What does this mean? We know what we mean when we speak of the nervous system or the circulatory system. We are talking about the parts of our body that work together to perform certain functions. For example, when we talk about the nervous system, we are not talking only about the nerves, but also about the brain and its relationship to the nerves, and other organs. The same is true at the community level. There are a large number of factors which are related to one another within our physical and social environment. Specifically the public health model investigates the interrelationships among three factors:

- **the agent:** the specific factor that is affecting health, e.g., alcohol or drugs
- **the host:** the individual(s) who are being affected
- **the environment:** the physical surroundings of the community.



Using the substance abuse field as an example, the agent, host and environment are the following:

- **Agent:** The agent is any legal or illegal drug (including alcohol and tobacco) capable of causing physical, interpersonal, emotional, social or economic harm to people or communities.
- **Host:** The host is a current, former or potential consumer of alcohol/drugs.
- **Environment:** The environment is the social, political and cultural settings in which the host and agent interact.

When we use a public health model to devise prevention strategies for our communities, we can develop strategies that focus on each of the three sides of the triangle. That is, we can develop strategies that focus specifically on the agent—in this case, alcohol and drugs; we can develop strategies that focus on the host—in this case, individuals currently using or who might be potential users of alcohol and drugs; or we can develop strategies that focus on the environment—the community in which alcohol and drug abuse is taking place.

Let's take a look at what some of these different kinds of strategies might look like:

Examples of agent strategies:

- Agent strategies might focus on education to reduce availability of alcohol, such as a letter-writing campaign by members of one neighborhood coalition that is directed at neighborhood retail alcohol outlets found selling alcohol to minors. The letter could be designed to educate retailers about (1) the neighborhood's concerns about alcohol accessibility; (2) data about the social cost of alcohol problems; and (3) reference to State laws outlawing underage sales and the legal consequences.
- Agent strategies could focus on enforcement to reduce availability, such as a campaign to intervene at the renewal of retail liquor licenses to be undertaken by one neighborhood coalition. Members of the coalition will attend hearings of the Alcoholic Beverage Control Board to request suspension of licenses when there is a history of selling alcohol to minors.

Examples of host strategies:

- Host strategies could focus on what is sometimes called demand reduction, e.g., discouraging young adults from purchasing alcohol through a program

of placing undercover police officers in neighborhood retail alcohol outlets.

- *Host strategies could also focus on discouraging youth from using alcohol or drugs through a peer mentoring process. For example, youth in one targeted neighborhood will be recruited for participation in a program focused on strengthening the skills and resources available to young people. The program will seek to bolster the resistance of youth to alcohol and other drug usage by reestablishing a sense of community through social bonding within groups and reconnecting them to local institutions.*

Example of environmental strategies:

- *The environment can be liquor stores, bars or other places where alcohol is sold or served. A strategy to address the environment is the development of a community driven public policy to limit the number of liquor stores in a particular geographic area of a city. As a side note, there are always strong political and social aspects to environmental approaches because the key strategy for modifying environments is policy.*

To better understand the difference between strategies that focus on the individual (host) and those that focus on the environment, review the prevention strategies handout (Handout #1) with participants. As you review the strategies, ask for questions and examples.

Next, assess the group's level of understanding. If you feel that the group could benefit from additional examples, use the sample Public Health Strategy Worksheets (Handouts #2 and #3) to review agent/host/environment strategies for another prevention related issue: the proliferation of crack houses. As you review the strategies listed, ask group members to see if they can think of other strategies that could fall into each of the three focus areas.

III. The Role of Policy

(15 minutes)

Use the following mini-lecture to introduce the role of policy:

Policy is the tool that enables communities to change environments. Policy structures a change in people's behavior independent of individual attitudes. It also relocates the point of accountability away from individuals to organizations and political bodies that have formal and informal power in communities. For example, if multi-unit tenant housing is run down and dilapidated, an individual strategy could be to work with owners to individually take responsibility to improve their property. An environmental approach would be to develop a policy to be passed and implemented by the Housing Authority or City Council requiring that property owners adhere to specific standards or risk being fined. The point of accountability for the individual approach is the property owner. Using an environmental approach, the body with the power to enact policy becomes the point of accountability.

Use some of the examples below to review the concept with participants. To ensure that group members grasp the basic concept, have them share other examples of formal and informal policy before moving on.

Examples of Types of Policy

Formal: Formal policy is codified or "put on the books." Examples include:

- Local city or county ordinances
- School policy, such as drug free schools
- Business policy, such as drug zero-tolerance, drug testing, fake ID checks
- State policy or laws

Informal: Informal policy is adopted and acted upon but not necessarily written down or adopted by a political body.

- Home: how or if we serve alcohol at parties
- Work: informal dress codes
- Faith community: serving alcohol at social events, allocating dollars to specific charities

Continue the mini-lecture:

What Makes Good Policy

Policy should be developed with the goals of solving real problems and furthering the agenda of the organization/group sponsoring it. Good policy lays the groundwork for more policy and more community action. Sound policy:

- *Builds community capacity, i.e., developing new leadership and strengthening the base of community residents to work on developing and promoting the adoption of policy.*
- *Solves real problems, i.e., those that directly affect people's lives. When policy emanates from the grassroots, the likelihood of solving real problems is good.*
- *Contributes to a sense of unity in community. Working on policy should serve to strengthen community commitment to social action.*
- *Lays the foundation for more policy. Working on policy should set up the next series of activities and policy development. Policy is not an end in itself, but a means to a bigger end of improving people's lives or social conditions.*
- *Pays for itself. Whenever possible, public policy should have a self-sustaining mechanism built in to ensure that those charged with its implementation will have the resources to carry out the work.*

IV . Problems vs. Issues

(30 Minutes)

In talking about doing community work, we have focused on identifying issues rather than problems.

Ask the group: What is the difference between an issue and a problem?

Give group members a short time to think about this question and identify the distinction. If no one can make the differentiation, review the following:

Community concerns can be expressed as problems or issues.

- **Problems** are overwhelming, large scale, topical concerns. Examples are poverty, racism and unemployment.

- **Issues** are concrete, immediate concerns that a community can do something about. Examples include a vacant house at 3218 Elm, drug dealing on corner of Wyandotte and Elm, or 25 substance abuse treatment slots for an entire community with a three-month waiting list.

As you analyze the concerns of your community, work to define these concerns as issues rather than broad problems. An issue should be:

- **Immediate.** A concern is an issue if there is an immediacy about the concern and people want to act on it. If something is immediate, it "hits" people in their "gut," not their head. Problems "touch" people in their head. Immediate concerns hit many people because lots of people are affected by them.
- **Specific.** An issue is something that can be specified. It is concrete, not abstract. Concerns must be explicitly identified to be acted on. Where is the issue located? Who is affected by the concern? How are they affected?
- **Measurable.** For a concern to be an issue, it must be measurable. Can you measure it? How many drug houses are you dealing with? How much time do people have to wait for drug treatment?
- **Winnable.** The scope of the activity has to be of a scale that allows the organization to be effective. If you take on the problem of homelessness, it is too big to address. If you take on the issue of an absentee landlord renting apartments to drug dealers on a block, you can achieve your goals on this issue.
- **Result in real improvement in people's lives.** Will the issue that you have chosen to address improve people's lives? If yes, how? How do you know that it will help? Have the residents of the community told you? It is important that the results of the work meet the expectations of the community.
- **Be widely felt.** How many people have expressed concern about the issue? Solving social issues often requires a strong community coalition.
- **Be deeply felt.** Do residents feel passionate about this issue? The level of depth of feeling can frequently be measured by the willingness to work on the issue.
- **Be solvable in a reasonable amount of time.** How long will it take to solve this issue? If the time is too long you may lose the community members' interest in the process. The time line needs to be

reasonable and geared to the immediacy of the issue.

- *Is non-divisive. The work should not split the community or coalition into factions. Rather, the issue should unify the base of people with whom you are working.*
- *Is consistent with the group's values. Values serve as a base to assess if the issue is consistent with what is important to the community. If the solution to a problem makes members of the community uncomfortable or if the means do not justify the ends, a new solution must be found.*

BREAK

15 minutes

V. Practice in Choosing An Issue

(30 minutes)

Split the group into small groups. Explain that before beginning to define specific issues in their own community, each small group will be working on analyzing a model scenario designed to help them understand the process of identifying issues for action. Note that in the next workshop, you will be using the same scenario in order to learn about the steps in the strategic planning process. Provide group members with copies of the Sample Community Scenario (Handout #5) included at the end of this workshop. Ask each group to read and discuss the sample scenario. Based on the guidelines that they just discussed, have each group brainstorm some of the ways in which issues could be defined in the sample community. Ask each group to share the issues they identified. Work with group members to make their issues specific and concrete. You may want to use the sample suggestion sheet as a guide.

Once the group has completed this exercise, review the Choosing an Issue Worksheet (Handout #4) so that they can see how an identified issue begins to be analyzed.

POINTER – Groups that are first learning how to identify issues for action tend to define issues too broadly.

The “Choosing An Issue” examples provided at the end of the Workshop Nine materials contain examples of common responses. When individuals define issues too broadly, it is helpful to lead them through a series of questions about the broader issue to help them identify a more concrete issue within the broader one. As group members suggest issues, consider using this questioning technique to provide practice in breaking broad issues down into “workable” ones.



VI. Discussion of Community Assessment Analysis

(45 Minutes)

Engage group members in a review and analysis of the information that they collected through their community tours and community assessment process. Based on the data collected, what are the most critical community risk factors identified by the residents surveyed? What are some of the key protective factors that the survey surfaced? What are some of the key environmental issues that the assessment surfaced? Do some of the findings point towards particular policy concerns within the neighborhood (such as those related to enforcement, access, etc.)? Where does the community's passion appear to be?

As group members review the survey, have them look for trends in the answers as well as for responses that seem inconsistent or confusing. Are there particular issues that are more pressing for families with young children versus the larger population of the community? Are issues experienced differently by diverse ethnic groups living in the community? Did any issues seem particularly compelling due to the strong reactions of residents? How do survey results compare with what they saw during neighborhood walks or other data that they collected on the community?

VII. Beginning to Identify Issues for Action (30 Minutes)

After the group has had an opportunity to participate in an analysis of their assessment activities, have them work together to define identified issues in more specific, concrete “issue” language. Work with the group to generate a list of the range of issues their assessment has uncovered. Have them note which risk and protective factors are critical to those issues. This will help them to begin to prioritize issues for their future action campaigns. Note that after Workshop Ten, the group will use the list they generated to come to a consensus regarding the preliminary direction of their community action group.

Finding the Issue Within the Problem

Often the information collected through a community surveying process may be too broad to help identify specific community issues. At the same time, if a survey is crafted carefully, it can help a group “pull out” specific issues within a larger concern. In a community survey conducted in the Bedford Stuyvestant community in New York City, for example, over 70 percent of residents felt that drug-related problems and crime were the biggest concerns in the community. While this statistic did not provide enough information to craft a specific issue, a closer look at the survey did. Residents were particularly concerned about the level of drug- and alcohol-related activities taking place in neighborhood parks, making these parks unsafe for young children. Based on their own experiences and their neighborhood tours, community action group members were aware of specific parks where this activity was prevalent. Thus, reducing drug- and alcohol-related activity in a specific park in the target area was a possible way to make the “drug problem” concrete and specific enough for a community action campaign.

If Your Community Action Group Is Already Up and Running

Use the worksheets in Workshops Nine and Ten each time your group chooses a new issue for action. New members joining an already existing group should also have an opportunity to review the case study with the group facilitator so that they are introduced to the strategic planning process and begin to get a feel for identifying issues for action. After reviewing the case study, you might want to provide another simulation for new members to practice defining issues. This will enable you to assess their grasp of this most critical program component.

Sample Community Scenario

Marrionville, Illinois is a city of 185,000 people. It is not unlike many cities of comparable size in the Midwest. Marrionville has a rich history of ethnic and cultural diversity with strong participation in civic affairs from the African American and Anglo communities. Over the last 10 years, the city has seen a dramatic increase in representation from the Latino community as shifting demographics have followed changes in the economic base of the city.

Marrionville has also experienced many of the changes that have marked other midwestern cities, including increases in crime and violence. The crime problem has perplexed city leaders and the police department. A number of years ago, these problems were relegated to a few well known “hot spots” throughout the city. Now, however, some of the older neighborhoods have seen an increase in alcohol- and drug-related crime occurring in the streets and in what used to be well maintained parks. The police speculate that the parks have been taken over by groups of young males who are part of a well organized drug ring. In recent years, the drug of choice appears to have shifted from crack cocaine to “crank” or methamphetamine. In addition, there remains the problem of drinking in the parks—usually cheap high-alcohol-content malt liquor and fortified wines.

Recently, a 10 year old boy was hit by a stray bullet—the result of drug deal gone wrong—as he walked by a problem park on his way home from school in the late afternoon. Fortunately he was not killed and recovered from the gunshot. Residents in this area, called Washington Park, were outraged after the shooting, claiming that the police abandoned this neighborhood because it is poor and, while ethnically diverse, has a majority of African American residents. The police deny the accusation and maintain that they have always patrolled the area. They blame the residents for failing to take responsibility for the neighborhood and abandoning it to drug dealers.

After the shooting, a few residents met to decide what to do about the problems occurring in their park and on their streets. In their analysis of the area, they determined that there are five liquor stores within two blocks of the park. Moreover, residents have witnessed drug dealing in the park and on the nearby streets and corners. They also have documented that groups of young adults appearing to be in their late teens or early twenties are hanging out in the park and on the corners nearby. And while it is true that the police do patrol the area on a fairly regular basis, the residents have noticed that the loiterers seem to know when to disperse to avoid police attention.

The task of the group is to determine the real issues and how they can be fixed. There seem to be so many facets of the problem that they are having a difficult time deciding what to do first. However, they know that it is important to do something to improve the welfare of the residents and they know it should happen soon.

Choosing an Issue in Marrionville: Some Suggestions and Hints

It is often difficult for community groups to determine the issue they want to address as they confront the realities of their environment. The Marrionville example contains a number of different issues that could effectively frame community action work. At the same time, the scenario is likely to elicit many concerns that would not be specific enough for targeted community action work. To get a better sense of how to move forward with concrete issues, the examples below provide suggestions for how a group facing the situation described might proceed, as well as some examples of directions that would be too broad.

Choosing to Target the Park Through a Variety of Strategies

Focusing the community action group's strategies on the "problem park" will give residents a specific target for their work, and provides an opportunity to employ a variety of strategies that could also have an impact on the community.

- 1) **A Community Engagement Strategy.** The community could establish a "take back the streets" program or citizen watch that engages residents to patrol the areas around the park. In general, greater community presence and engagement is likely to encourage drug dealers and loiterers to move elsewhere.
- 2) **Make the Park Setting Safer.** Community members could analyze environmental design factors such as lighting and placement of shrubbery to determine how the park could be changed to discourage hanging out and selling drugs
- 3) **Restrict After Hours Park Usage or Drinking in the Park.** The community could work with local officials to write an ordinance restricting use of the park after dark or explicitly forbidding drinking within the park's boundaries. With increased police involvement to enforce these ordinances, the restrictions are likely to make the park less friendly to drug dealers.
- 4) **Change the Local Policing Approach.** The scenario indicates that the police patrol the area around the park, but it appears that this approach is not deterring the problem behaviors. The community could seek a change in police department policy so that officers are assigned to actually walk a beat in the area where the problems are occurring. Consistent police presence will dramatically change the patterns of drug selling behavior and loitering.
- 5) **Changing Local Policy on Alcohol Outlet Density.** The scenario notes that there are many liquor stores within the vicinity of the problem park. Violence and high numbers of alcohol outlets go hand in hand. The community could choose to address this overconcentration of liquor outlets. Cities and counties have the power to regulate alcohol outlets through nuisance abatement laws or land-use tools associated with zoning. In addition, local communities can mobilize the local state Alcohol Beverage Control Agency to become more involved in addressing problem alcoholic beverage sales. Community members would need to engage in significant research to better understand the accountability and power of both the local and state government regarding enforcement in these areas in order to determine an appropriate approach for this action.

Defining the Issues Too Broadly

Here are some examples of how the issues described above can be defined too broadly, making it difficult for a community group to effectively take action.

- 1) **Get Rid of All the Drug Dealers!** While there is no question that reducing the level of drug dealing is one of the desired goals of the work of a community group faced with the scenario described above, framing the concern in this way is much too broad for developing strategies. Note that a number of the strategies described on the preceding page would, if implemented well, have the effect of reducing the level of drug dealing, but they are much more targeted in their structure.
- 2) **Get the Youth Jobs.** The scenario seems to imply that youth unemployment in the City of Marrionville may be a problem. It is probable that many of the people engaged in the problem behavior are unemployed or marginally employed. While youth unemployment is a critical problem, framed in this way, it is probably too large for the community group to tackle. An alternative strategy that would engage youth in the neighborhood watch and “take back the park” activities would provide an opportunity to get youth involved in the community action work while tackling a more targeted issue.
- 3) **Get Rid of the Guns.** Again, this is a very important problem that is described too broadly. The easy access to guns has made incidents such as the shooting described in this scenario tragically common. Residents interested in reducing access to guns need to do specific research to determine a more targeted strategy, including analyzing community gun sales, working with police to identify “hot spots” for illegal gun sales, and reviewing gun sale laws within their communities. A community action group interested in working on this issue might choose to join forces with a state or local coalition already pursuing this work. In addition, as a broad policy issue, reducing access to guns should be seen as a long-term goal rather than as a solution to a specific scenario such as the one described here.
- 4) **Get People Treatment So That They Don’t Abuse Alcohol or Drugs.** It is certainly possible that there is no drug and alcohol residential treatment center in the neighborhood to help those people selling and/or using drug in the neighborhood. If there is no residential care, advocating for such a facility could be a long-term goal, but does not specifically address the safety issues described here. Thus, while a worthy goal, focusing on access to treatment would not provide any immediate change in the targeted environment.

WORKSHOP NINE

Handouts

Workshop Nine – Handout #1
Prevention Strategies

INDIVIDUAL	ENVIRONMENTAL
Focus on behavior and behavior change	Focus on policy and policy change
Focus on the relationship between the individual and related problems	Focus on the social, political, and economic <i>context</i> of related problems
Short-term focus on program development	Long-term focus on policy development
Individual does not participate in decision-making	People gain power by acting collectively
Individual as audience	Individual as advocate
Professionals make the decisions	Professionals help create avenues for citizens to develop and express their voice

Workshop Nine – Handout #2
Public Health Strategy Worksheet

STATE THE ISSUE

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STRATEGY

AGENT:

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Benefits of this approach:

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Drawbacks of this approach:

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HOST:

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Benefits of this approach:

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Drawbacks of this approach:

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ENVIRONMENT:

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Benefits of this approach:

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Drawbacks of this approach:

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Workshop Nine – Handout #3

Public Health Strategy

STATE THE ISSUE

Slum landlord housing in a three-block area allowing crack houses to flourish.

STRATEGY

AGENT: *Focus on Drugs*

1) Get police to seize more cocaine, heroin and other drugs from the community supply.

Benefits of this approach:

Impacts other areas of the city as well as this area.

Drawbacks of this approach:

*This is a short-term solution, it may not be doable and requires police resources—
which are expensive.*

HOST: *Focus on Individual*

1) Police engage in a sweep to arrest all drug users in crack houses.

Benefits of this approach:

If community has a drug court structure, individuals may be referred into treatment.

Drawbacks of this approach:

Drug users will be back in houses in a short time.

2) Increase drug treatment slots by 10 to assist drug users to get clean and sober.

Benefits of this approach:

Community needs more treatment and it works for those who complete the process.

Drawbacks of this approach:

*This is a long-term strategy. It is difficult to find the needed dollars and 10 treatment
slots are probably not enough.*

ENVIRONMENT: *Focus on the political, social and economic context in which problems occur—uses policy as a tool.*

1) Pass local ordinance requiring inspections of all rental housing and assessing fines if property is out of compliance with housing, building and/or health codes.

Benefits of this approach:

Long-term solution improves other neighborhoods and could pay for itself.

Drawbacks of this approach:

Could take a while to develop and pass ordinance, crack houses could take a considerable period of time to actually clean up.

2) Close down and board up all known crack houses on problem blocks in identified areas.

Benefits of this approach:

Immediate reduction of crack use in area, potential quick reduction of drug use of drug-related crime in area.

Drawbacks of this approach:

Adds to physical deterioration of area instead of physical improvement.

Property remains blighted.

Workshop Nine – Handout #4

Choosing an Issue Worksheet

Defining an issue requires gathering reports, surveys, personal observations and other resources that accurately describe the issue that you wish to address. Too often, we define an issue in broad strokes that do not support the development of an action plan. For example, communities are concerned about “intoxicated youth.” But to fully understand this problem, we need to know, among other things, the number of youth alcohol-related arrests, injuries and other incidents, where they get their alcohol, brand preference, and where youth consume the alcohol. Also, additional information can be used to substantiate any “findings” required as part of the development of public policy to address the issue. Above all, defining the issue requires that you describe it in ways that the community can relate to and understand.

Identifying the Issue

Work through the questions below to develop and define your selection.

- Where is the issue happening? Is the area urban, suburban, rural? Are you talking about your whole community, just your neighborhood, or only part of your neighborhood?
- Who is affected? What is the predominant ethnicity, culture, age group, etc. affected by the issue?
- What does the issue look like? What would somebody see if he/she were becoming aware of the issue?
- How big is the issue? How do you measure it?
- Any additional information.

Where/what is the issue?

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Who is the issue affecting?

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What does the issue look like?

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Is there any important relevant information?

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What evidence do you have (through community assessment or other activities) that this issue is a compelling one for your community?

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Is there additional information that you have gained through your community assessment activities that is relevant to helping you to define or refine your issue?

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How will working on this issue help to reduce risk factors or enhance protective factors for substance abuse in your community? Be specific about which risk or protective factors will be addressed by choosing to work on this issue.

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Now state the issue in 25 words or less:

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Workshop Nine – Handout #5

Sample Worksheet for Scenario

Identifying an Issue

Where is the issue?

The public park located at the corner of Ohio and Marin Streets is unsafe due to constant alcohol consumption and public intoxication occurring in the park.

Who is the issue affecting?

Residents of the Washington Park Neighborhood, children and families wishing to use the park, the children and staff of the Head Start program located at the west end of the park.

What does the issue look like?

From noon to late evening drinking and fights occur in the park. Large numbers of young adult males and homeless males drinking in all locations in the park.

Additional important information?

Most problems occur Friday, Saturday and Sunday. During warm weather there is more of this activity in the park. Many of the people drinking may also be involved in drug dealing occurring on the nearby corners.

What evidence do you have (through community assessment or other activities) that this issue is a compelling one for your community?

The recent shooting of a young boy passing by the park has mobilized residents who have already begun to meet to try to figure out what to do. There has been a lot of press coverage and people throughout the community have been talking about the incident.

How will working on this issue help to reduce risk factors or enhance protective factors for substance abuse in your community? Be specific about which risk or protective factors will be addressed by choosing to work on this issue.

Reducing public drinking, possible drug dealing and the crime associated with it can help to create a climate that enforces norms that make drinking and drug dealing unacceptable behavior within the community. It can also reduce access for young adults who might hang out in the

area. Cleaning up the park will also make it available to children – providing healthy alternative activities. Finally, research suggests that cleaning up neighborhood “hot spots” one by one can improve overall neighborhood stability and safety, which can reduce risks for substance abuse.

Now state the issue in 25 words or less.

Public drinking in the park is preventing families and children from using the park for recreation and creating an unsafe situation for residents living nearby.